

The National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP) is a network of established and emerging rural institutions that work together to strengthen rural America. The principal members of the network are State Rural Development Councils in 37 of the 50 states.

Each of the State Councils, which are comprised of active members from a broad range of rural development-related organizations, is served by a full-time executive director. States differ in how they are organized and in the rural issues they decide to address.

This profile is one in a series highlighting the work of the State Councils.

For more information about the National Rural Development Partnership:

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**National Rural
Development
Partnership**

State Profile

Idaho Rural Partnership

Since Idaho Rural Partnership (IRP) began operating under Executive Order from the Governor in 1991, its mission has been to join diverse public and private resources in innovative collaborations that strengthen communities and improve life in rural Idaho. IRP is widely known and valued in Idaho as an accessible organization that makes local problems a priority, while working hard to develop innovative system-wide solutions that combine the knowledge of local communities with the resources offered by technology; experienced organizations; and state, federal, and private funders.

IRP has a diverse Board of Directors and membership that includes all rural perspectives and serves as an informational conduit between local communities and organizations. Recognized as a safe place to resolve conflicts and work through challenges, IRP has built its reputation on bringing together likely and unlikely partners to create and maintain opportunity. By creating affiliated work groups of IRP members and availing itself of current technology, IRP supports communities with new products, training, information, and streamlined regulation. IRP is known by its partners and the communities



it serves as an action-oriented network with a proven ability to anticipate issues, while working to benefit rural Idaho.

IRP has been recognized for its contributions to a broad variety of rural issues. In particular, its dedication to Idaho's education, leadership, economic development, and natural resource utilization communities stands out among its efforts to improve the lives of rural Idaho's residents.

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Driving IRP's momentum is its 600 volunteer members, who represent over 200 public and private organizations and actively support the health and success of rural Idaho. A 25-member Board of Directors guides this network and represents the following organizations:

- ▼ US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- ▼ US Environmental Protection Agency
- ▼ USDA/Rural Development
- ▼ Idaho State Senate
- ▼ Idaho State House of Representatives
- ▼ Idaho Department of Labor
- ▼ Idaho Department of Agriculture
- ▼ Idaho Department of Commerce
- ▼ Southwest Idaho RC&D
- ▼ Association of Idaho Cities
- ▼ Idaho Association of Counties
- ▼ Nez Perce Tribe
- ▼ U S West Communications
- ▼ Idaho Dairymen's Association
- ▼ Idaho Council on Industry and Environment
- ▼ Tom Hudson Co.
- ▼ VGA Enterprises
- ▼ Grangeville Economic Management Team
- ▼ Idaho Community Foundation
- ▼ Bechtel, Inc.
- ▼ Sawtooth National Forest
- ▼ Region IV Development Association
- ▼ Office of the Governor



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Idaho Rural Partnership at Work

OnePlan Supports Conservation

Idaho's farmers and ranchers face a fragmented, complex set of incentives and regulations on farm conservation, many of which require an on-farm conservation plan. Since 1994, IRP, in collaboration with agencies, industries, and associations, has been developing OnePlan, an innovative planning tool and website that assists farmers and ranchers with this task. As it improves farmers' understanding of natural resources and environmental requirements, OnePlan eliminates multiple planning efforts and offers guidance consistent with USDA/EPA Clean Water Action Plan philosophies and missions. By integrating all agency program information on a portal website that offers 700+ pages of agricultural producer information and 400+ links to external agriculture-related sites, OnePlan is helping Idaho further improve stewardship of its natural resources.

"IRP builds strong connections between our rural communities and the organizations that serve them."

**Tom Hudson
Tom Hudson Company**

Finally Home!

Recognizing housing as one of the biggest challenges facing rural Idaho, IRP has made homebuyer education in rural areas a priority. Working with the Idaho Housing and Finance Housing, Neighborhood Housing Services, Bank of America, and many other key partners, IRP developed a curriculum and delivery model that increases awareness of the economics, responsibilities, and process of homebuying in underserved rural areas. Recommended by the Governor's Affordable Housing Task Force, Finally Home! received a \$193,100 HUD grant in 1998 and an additional \$300,000 in 1999 that will enable the program to serve potential homebuyers statewide in both English and Spanish.

Internet Masters

Information technologies can be a two-edged sword: while often helping residents

overcome the isolation of living in a rural area, they also can alienate rural citizens, putting them at even greater disadvantage that often promotes job flight to urban areas. After identifying a need for accessible services in technology education, IRP envisioned developing an Internet Masters program to build a network of local, volunteer computer experts who could help rural residents improve their use of technology. With support from U S West, GTE, and the Association of Idaho Cities, a mobile computer lab has been created to offer training to those seeking to help their communities become technologically savvy.

IRP Resources

IRP has developed several powerful community resource guides to help its partners and community service providers understand rural life. The following resources provide key information while offering providers a link to organizations

and rural residents that can offer additional information and opportunity.

- IRP Update—a newsletter published four times annually.
- 1999-2000 Idaho Small Business and Community Development Resource Directory—an easy-to-use directory that helps community leaders, business owners, and rural practitioners quickly reach the right resource.
- 1999 IRP Facilitator Directory—a directory that enables communities to access the human resources needed to help solve their problems.
- 1999 Profile of Rural Idaho—a publication focused on the economic and social trends affecting rural Idaho.